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TITLE: A Statewide Collaboration of HIV/STD Prevention Education

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ISSUE: The Connecticut State Department of Education has set a live year goal to establish Strengthen and expand HIV/STD prevention education within comprehensive school health education. To successfully accomplish this task, collaboration with other state and community based organizations is vital in creating a comprehensive, holistic approach to HIV/STD prevention education.

SETTING: A collaboration of state and community based organizations providing statewide training and resources for school personnel.

PROJECT: Under the direction of the State Department of Education (SDE) and the Department of Public Health (DPH) an HIV/STD task force was formed to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure the systematic implementation of quality HIV/STD prevention education. Members of the task force were carefully chosen to ensure a balanced/diverse representation of health professionals, parents, clergy, and educators. The task force was charged with addressing the following objectives: assess the availability and adequacy of HIV/STD education, develop a systemic plan to provide technical assistance and training to school districts, create strategies to impact students at highest risk for HIV and gather sample policies that support the delivery of HIV/STD prevention education. This collective approach enables the task force to identify the strengths and weaknesses of existing programs, which in turn, helps to avoid duplication of services, and identifies implementation gaps.

RESULTS: Even though school districts are required to offer HIV/AIDS education, the task force found that the content and delivery varies greatly across the state. Teacher training in HIV/STD prevention was lacking and many districts expressed an interest /need for sample HIV policies. The task force was instrumental in developing a training plan targeting school personnel including K-12 teachers, nurses, administrators and support services. To date, over 250 school personnel have been trained and supplemental resources offered to districts include consultation services, and a statewide newsletter for teachers. The task force is currently working on plans to address highest risk and policy issues.

LESSONS LEARNED: Collaboration among a diverse task force has allowed for an exchange of vital expertise in creating an informational, motivational and behavioral skills based approach to HIV/STD prevention education in Connecticut schools.

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